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F. O'Connor
ME.

CMP agrees to \$16 million cleanup

By Andrew Kekacs
Business Writer

^{EPA}
Central Maine Power Co. has reached an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency over the cleanup of a hazardous waste site in Augusta.

According to a civil suit and consent decree filed Friday at U.S. District Court in Bangor, CMP could be required to pay up to \$16 million to remove oil tainted with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from soil and water around the bankrupt F. O'Connor Co. in Augusta. PCBs are suspected of causing cancer.

The O'Connor property is on the EPA's list of hazardous-waste sites earmarked for cleanup under federal Superfund legislation. In a statement issued Friday, the EPA said the F. O'Connor Co. began operating a salvage yard on the site in the early 1950s.

Operations included stripping

and recycling transformers containing PCB-laden oil. The transformers came primarily from CMP, according to the government statement.

In 1976, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection found high levels of PCBs in soils at the site. The EPA began investigating the property in 1982 and added it to the Superfund list the following year.

Clark Irwin, a CMP spokesman, said the Augusta electrical utility's only involvement at the site was to sell used and surplus transformers to O'Connor. Even so, the Superfund law put CMP in the chain of responsibility for cleaning up the pollutants.

Julie Belaga, administrator of the regional EPA office in Boston, praised the utility's conduct during the investigation.

"CMP has cooperated constructively throughout the Superfund process," Belaga said. "The utility conducted a success-

ful investigation early on at the site and has now agreed to follow through with the cleanup."

Although CMP has accepted legal responsibility for the work, Irwin said the utility's shareholders and customers will not necessarily be forced to bear all of the costs. The utility's liability insurance might cover the expense, he said.

CMP also might pursue others who were involved in the case, from the owners of O'Connor through Westinghouse Electric Corp., which made the transformers.

"If we are handed a bill for these costs, we will attempt to recover from other responsible parties," said Irwin.

The public will have until the middle of January to comment on the proposed consent decree. Copies will be available for public review at U.S. District Court in Bangor and the Lithgow Public Library in Augusta.

Superfund Records Center

SITE: O'CONNOR

BREAK: 13.3

OTHER: 534265